

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006387

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OREP](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN](#) [AFFAIRS](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: SHARON AND CODEL HAGEL/BIDEN: COMMITMENT TO
WORKING WITH NEW PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP

Classified By: DCM Gene A. Cretz for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Sharon told Codel Hagel/Biden that he was fully committed to making peace with the post-Arafat Palestinian leadership, but that there would be no compromise on holding the the new leadership accountable for actions to combat the terrorist infrastructure. While recognizing that Syria, Iran, and Hizbollah could undermine the new leadership, Sharon nonetheless offered little by way of understanding or sympathy toward the leadership's challenge. Some in the Codel challenged Sharon to seize this unique opportunity to help Israel (and the international community) combat a major cause of international terrorism (the Israeli-Palestinian dispute) and rising anti-Semitism. Sharon reiterated concerns about Iran, thought Egypt could do more against smuggling, lauded the bilateral relationship with Jordan and argued that the USG should ratchet up pressure against Syria to stop its support for Iran and Hizbollah. The Prime Minister said that Israel was prepared to take positive steps toward the new Palestinian leadership after the elections and believed that Europe and others also had important roles to play on the economic support front. End Summary.

2. (C) Prime Minister Sharon led off his November 30 meeting with Codel Hagel/Biden (accompanied by Charge) by asserting that bilateral ties with the U.S. had never been stronger, reflected best in close strategic cooperation. Acknowledging he faced challenges on the internal political front, Sharon nonetheless pledged that Israel was prepared to make genuine compromises for real peace with the new Palestinian leadership if that new order put a stop to terror. He was fully committed to making peace despite major domestic struggles characterized by a "left" which has no power and a "right" which was totally opposed to his initiative. The PM saw the current timeframe as a window of opportunity and reiterated Israeli acceptance of all of President Bush's initiatives and bilateral agreements over the past few years regarding the future of the region. He noted that Israel had not openly interfered with the process of choosing presumptive Palestinian leaders and that secret contacts continued. He asserted that Israel was prepared to help the Palestinians through the elections and that open talks would occur soon after. Sharon had no "personal" problems with Abu Mazen or Abu Ala'a; everything depended on the steps they would take against terror. As he did throughout the discussion, Sharon noted the dangers presented "from the outside" by the Iran/Syria/Hizbollah nexus and the impact it could have on the future, despite the best of Palestinian intentions and potential actions.

3. (C) In response to a Codel member's comment that progress towards Israeli-Palestinian peace would have a dramatic impact on ending regional and international terrorism, Sharon quickly stated that Israel should not be held responsible for terrorism, asserting that it was the target of terror even prior to June 1967. It was not correct to believe that terror would disappear if the Israeli-Palestinian dispute were solved. The only thing that Israel was "responsible" for, he maintained, was defending its people. Sharon went on to defend Israel's actions saying that there would have been more progress on the roadmap had there been a Palestinian partner. Now, with Arafat's passing, a new opportunity had arisen to implement the alternative Gaza disengagement with cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. Sharon could now envision cooperation between the security services against terror and cooperation to ensure that the Israeli population move from the West Bank settlements and Gaza did not take place under fire. Sharon asserted that with the tens of thousands of armed people under the Palestinian Authority, they should be able to do what they need to do to oppose the terrorism in their midst. Israel, in any case, will not bow or give in to pressure. Subsequent to a successful Gaza disengagement, the roadmap could be implemented in stages.

4. (C) On Iran, Sharon said the GOI watched the situation closely and was in close touch with the EU and USG. Israel did not have to lead the effort, it should be an international one culminating in the UNSC. While monitoring of Iranian nuclear facilities might postpone the timing of weaponization, the Iranians continued "to work" and Tehran had no desire to stop. While praising the efforts of the UK, Germany, and France to craft the agreement with Iran, the PM believed the matter needed to be brought to the UNSC. While moderate Iranians may exist, the religious element was

overwhelming and the goal of the Iranian regime remained the elimination of Israel and the destruction of the Jewish people.

15. (C) Sharon warned of the continuing dangers posed by Syria, Iran, and Hizbollah. A Hizbollah armed with 13,000 rockets, bolstered by a recalcitrant Syrian regime continuing to support Iran and refusing to expel Hamas and PIJ leaderships, made for a dangerous situation to which USG pressure needed to be brought to bear. Sharon asserted that most of the terrorism in the Palestinian territories was carried out by the Tanzim on orders from Damascus or Hizbollah. The situation has quieted down because Israel has become more efficient, he said, but the danger continues.

16. (C) Regarding Egypt, Sharon said that Cairo could do more to stop the smuggling of arms into Gaza, including anti-tank rockets allegedly coming into the Sinai via Lebanon. The Egyptians were doing more than before on that score but they neglected the situation for so many years that the well-developed smuggling routes went on. Neither Egypt nor the Europeans had a role now to help in furthering negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. If "balance" were needed the U.S. would provide it.

17. (C) Relations with Jordan were close, even strategic, said Sharon. The Jordanians are active in acting against terror. The bilateral cooperation was a direct result of how peace had changed the situation.

18. (C) Senator Biden agreed that Sharon was now in a unique position of leadership vis-a-vis his own government to help Abu Mazen who faced two major problems: he lacked a natural constituency and, by Sharon's own admission, he faced external forces not of his doing that could undermine his authority. Biden asserted that Sharon was well-placed to help on the electoral process and on cooperation on Gaza disengagement at a minimum to enhance Abu Mazen's credibility. Biden also asked what the U.S. could do to help. Sharon believed that Washington could help in minimizing the external challenges to Abu Mazen by warning Syria, Iran and Hizbollah to stop any actions that undermine Abu Mazen. Damascus was feeling pressure already on Lebanon and Iraq; that needed to be ratcheted up significantly to make sure Assad got the point. Sharon also thought that the international community should do its part by helping Abu Mazen and Fayyad through infrastructure projects, not just the provision of cash, which would "disappear." For its part, Israel would help by continuing to be discreet in steps it took in support of Abu Mazen before the election. Once that election took place, Israel was ready to help on the humanitarian side by lifting roadblocks and checkpoints (as long as steps were taken against the movement of terrorists) and in other cooperative agreements such as the one reached between the two tourism ministers on cooperating for the upcoming holiday season.

19. (C) Senator Feinstein told Sharon that he now had the partner he had been seeking and needed to deal positively and proactively with the new Palestinian leadership not only for Israel's security sake, but to combat the rise of virulent anti-Semitism in Europe. She also expressed the hope that the USG should also be playing a more active role in pushing the sides toward a solution. Sharon replied by asserting that anti-Semitism attributed to Israeli actions is mere cover and convenience. He noted that one easy step the Palestinians could take now even before tackling the more difficult task of dismantling the terrorist infrastructure would be to stop the incitement against Israel.

110. (U) Codel staff cleared this message.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's
Classified SIPRNET website.

KURTZER